Past Klan Ties Asset: Stoner

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SAVANNAH (AP) — Stoner, James Earl Ray's new attorney, says his Ku Klux Klan back ground will be an asset if Ray's case is heard before a jury in Memphis, where he says people "detested Martin Luther King.

"My past KKK connections would help the case," Stoner told The Associated Press in an interview yesterday. "They show I'm a loyal white man and the white people of Shelby County (Memphis) are for white supremacy."

STONER, WHO had just returned to his Savannah home after a weekend meeting with Ray in Nashville, said the white people in Memphis, where King was shot and killed last April 4, "detested Martin Luther King.

"He (King) brought about his own death with his activities across the country," the attorney declared. "He was a troublemaker. He was in Memphis for the avowed purpose of violating a federal court injunction—he was there as a criminal."

Stoner said he believes Ray is innocent of charges he shot King and said Ray told him over the weekend that he had been "pressured" into entering a plea of guilty to the charges.

Stoner, 44, said he has been hired to represent Ray only in civil action which he said in Nashville would be in the form of libel suits against several national magazines.

RAY'S NEW attorney added yesterday the civil action "likely will include" suits for other than libel but he said he could not elaborate.

He said he could not say who would represent Ray in a criminal action but added "there is a natural overlap between the civil and criminal functions."

Stoner said he is vice chairman of the executive committee of the National States Rights Party.

He described the party yesterday as "larger than any other white segregationist organization in the country" and "more extreme than the Klan" to which Stoner said he previously belonged.